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For Immediate Release  
Sept. 7, 2006

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## **Senator Patterson warns senior citizens: “*Don’t be scammed!*”**

**LANSING**—As chairman of the Technology and Energy committee in the Michigan Senate, Sen. Bruce Patterson is warning his constituents, especially senior citizens, of a new telephone scam. Patterson said con artists are targeting DTE Energy customers in the metro Detroit area.

The swindlers claim to be from DTE’s collections department and tell customers that their bills are overdue and if they do not pay immediately over the phone, their service will be turned off. The scammers then ask for a checking account or credit card number to complete the transaction and ensure that the customers’ gas or electricity service will not be terminated.

Patterson said DTE’s collections department at times does call customers whose bills are overdue to have them pay over the phone to maintain their service. DTE officials recommend that if you receive this call and think it may be legitimate, get a copy of your bill and ask the caller to give your account number and the amount that is owed. If they cannot answer these questions, hang up and call your local police department to report the scam.

You should also contact DTE at 1-800-477-4747. DTE officials said that in addition to DTE, scammers have been telling customers they are calling from MichCon and Detroit Edison.

Patterson is working on legislation to protect consumers from these types of scams.

“With so much new technology being used in everyday life, we need to find ways to protect consumers and punish those responsible for preying on innocent people,” he said.

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